



GERALD E. CONNOLLY  
CHAIRMAN

COMMONWEALTH OF VIRGINIA  
**COUNTY OF FAIRFAX**  
BOARD OF SUPERVISORS  
FAIRFAX, VIRGINIA 22035

Suite 530  
12000 GOVERNMENT CENTER PARKWAY  
FAIRFAX, VIRGINIA 22035-0071

TELEPHONE 703- 324-2321  
FAX 703- 324-3955

[chairman@fairfaxcounty.gov](mailto:chairman@fairfaxcounty.gov)

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Dear Summit Participants,

On behalf of the Fairfax County Board of Supervisors, I thank you for your participation in today's gang prevention summit. Your attendance today is a statement that you are standing up with all of us to combat the one cloud on our the public safety horizon – gang violence.

Fairfax County consistently ranks as one of the nation's best communities in which to live. We offer world-class public schools, libraries, and parks and recreation, and the economic development in our county helps power the region's economy.

Our community is one of the safest, too. Our crime rate is the lowest of the 50 largest jurisdictions in the country. At the same time, we have one of the lowest ratios of police officers per capita. These facts reflect the outstanding work of our men and women in the Police Department and Sheriff's Office. It shows that the investments we are making – in schools, recreation, human services – are working.

But the rise of gang activity in our region looms. Gangs threaten the well-being of our children and our community. We must prevent our children from getting involved in a destructive, dangerous lifestyle.

While gangs are a law enforcement issue, they are not *just* a law enforcement issue. And today we will be talking about how we can work together to prevent our children from becoming involved in gangs, and how we can provide a way out for those who have become snared.

Many residents, community organizations, faith-based groups, business leaders and county agencies have become involved in anti-gang efforts, but the solution to the problem will not be found in any single program. We must address the problem with coordinated, community-based prevention, intervention and suppression efforts. And we must work together to maximize resources.

Recently, the Board established the Fairfax County Coordinating Council on Gang Prevention, which is sponsoring this summit. We created this Council because we believe gang prevention, intervention and suppression must be cross-agency, community-wide project. The ideas generated today will be incorporated into the recommendations the Council will make to the Board of Supervisors in June.

We can and must protect our children. Our community is already on the path to halting the further spread of gang activity, and today's summit allows us to continue the journey together.

Sincerely,

Gerald E. Connolly  
Chairman, Fairfax County Board of Supervisors

